

Global Gypsies to map out park tours

In what is believed to be an industry first, a professional touring and training organisation has been appointed to create and manage a specially designed tours program for Australia's newest and biggest remote area eco-retreat Karijini EcoRetreat, which opened this month in the heart of Karijini National Park in the Pilbara.

The company, Global Gypsies, will research and develop the tours, recruit and train the tour guides and generally co-ordinate the new tours program.

Owned by the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, under the control of its enterprise arm Gumala Enterprises, the retreat is managed by the Eco Company under the Ecomodation brand.

The African-style safari camp near Weano Gorge and the visitors centre comprises 40 luxury tents with ensuites, 10 standard tents with shared facilities, an alfresco area, caravan sites, campground and barbecue-style self-catering bush kitchens.

Access is by road (about 1300km from Perth and 1000km from Broome) and by air, with regular flights into Newman, Paraburdoo and Exmouth and shuttle services or hire cars available from these airports.

The retreat is the first accommodation — other than camping — to be developed inside the park and is expected to attract thousands of new visitors to Karijini each year.

Ecomodation general manager Michael Collins says Karijini EcoRetreat is one of the most exciting tourism developments in Australia.

"With its rising hills, red earth, plunging gorges and rock pools, Karijini has the potential to be the new Kimberley," he says.

"Traditionally, the park has received a relatively small amount of visitors because there was no accommodation but now the retreat is open, tourists who love the outback but also enjoy their creature comforts are discovering the magic of this wonderful destination."

Mr Collins says because the area is so steeped in Aboriginal culture and has such unique flora and fauna, it is

imperative to offer visitors a range of cultural and nature-based experiences once they arrive.

"The natural beauty is breathtaking, the camp is extremely comfortable and the food is great but we also wanted our visitors to have a range of activities to choose from while they are here," he said. "We decided to appoint an experienced tour operator who was familiar with the area to develop a suite of nature-based and cultural tours especially for us."

Details for Karijini EcoRetreat:
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